

Nicholas Arthur

KILBURN

MEMORIAL CONCERT SERIES

2005 Season

Presenting

Octagon 2005

Friday, March 11, 2005
8:00 pm



Arts Building
University of Alberta



DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC



The current tour of OCTAGON 2005 did not require funding assistance, but the members of the ensemble would like to convey our thanks and appreciation for past touring assistance to:

James Campbell

GAMI, Inc., Washington Station, Conn, Longreach.
Montreal, Québec

Rivka Golani

Marilyn Gilbert Artists Management, Toronto



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Program

Overture, "Die Fledermaus"

Johann Strauss
(1825-1899)

Arranged for Octet by Brett Dean, Principal viola, Berlin Philharmonic

Andrew Dawes and Patricia Shih, violins

Rivka Golani, viola

Antonio Lysy, cello

Wilmer Fawcett, contrabass

James Campbell, clarinet

Kenneth MacDonald, French horn

George Zukerman, bassoon

Serenata in vano (1914)

Carl August Nielsen
(1865-1931)

Antonio Lysy, cello

Wilmer Fawcett, contrabass

James Campbell, clarinet

Kenneth MacDonald, French horn

George Zukerman, bassoon

Concerto for Eight (2003)

Malcolm Forsyth
(b. 1936)

Andrew Dawes and Patricia Shih, violins

Rivka Golani, viola

Antonio Lysy, cello

Wilmer Fawcett, contrabass

James Campbell, clarinet

Kenneth MacDonald, French horn

George Zukerman, bassoon

Intermission

Octet in F Major, Opus 166 (1824)

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Adagio, allegro - Andante un poco mosso - Scherzo - Theme and Variations -
Minuet - Andante Molto, Allegro

Andrew Dawes and Patricia Shih, violins

Rivka Golani, viola

Antonio Lysy, cello

Wilmer Fawcett, contrabass

James Campbell, clarinet

Kenneth MacDonald, French horn

George Zukerman, bassoon

Program Notes

Overture, "Die Fledermaus"

Johann Strauss (1825-1899)

Arranged for Octet by Brett Dean, Principal viola, Berlin Philharmonic

Good evening to our **OCTAGON 2005** audience! You may find this a rather unusual opening for a programme which ends with the monumental Schubert Octet, so a word of explanation is in order. This charming transcription of the very familiar "Fledermaus" Overture was made by the well-known Australian composer-arranger-violist, Brett Dean, while he was living in Berlin and playing Principal viola in the great Berlin Philharmonic. He made the arrangement for the Berlin Philharmonic Octet of which he was a member, and originally they planned to use it as an encore on their Schubert Octet programme. However, they arrived at precisely the same conclusion as we did with **OCTAGON**. After the great Octet - possibly Schubert's chamber music masterpiece - it is simply not possible to add an encore. So, like our Berlin colleagues before us, we have decided to place our encore at the opening of our programme. We take pleasure in presenting you with this delicious touch of late 19th century Vienna.

Serenata in vano (1914)

Carl August Nielsen (1865-1931)

The *Serenata in vano* ("Serenade In Vain") was written in 1917 and is generally thought to have been a passionate anti-war statement by the composer. Utilizing mock marches, and poignant lyrical interludes, it is scored for a strange combination of instruments, all dark hued, and generally tending towards the musical lower depths - clarinet, horn, bassoon, cello and bass. Nielsen had a particular fondness (or was it a love-hate relationship?) for the clarinet, and once wrote of it "it is at once warm-hearted and completely hysterical, gentle as balm and screaming as a streetcar on poorly lubricated rails".

Given this ambivalent view of the instrument, it is not surprising that he wrote the *Serenata* for a clarinetist who intensified these characteristics in his playing. That player was Aage Oxenvad of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet. A contemporary critic wrote of Oxevad: "He has made a pact with the Trolls and the Giants. He has a TEMPER; a primitive force, harsh and clumsy, with a smattering of blue-eyed Danish amenity."

The seldom played *Serenata* is a short (8 minute) work which exploits all of the special characteristics of each of the instruments.

Nielsen, who was born on the island of Fyn between Jutland and Sjaeland, learned to play violin and trumpet from his father who was an excellent fiddler and cornet player - and also a

house painter. Even before attending the Royal Conservatory in Copenhagen he taught himself piano and formed a string quartet to learn the great classical repertoire. After a stint in the Royal Theatre Orchestra, he was appointed conductor of the Royal Opera and then, when he determined to concentrate more on composition, he taught at the Conservatory, becoming its director a few months before his death in 1931.

Concerto for Eight (2003)

Malcolm Forsyth (b. 1936)

Malcolm Forsyth's *Concerto for Eight* was commissioned by OCTAGON 2003 and premiered in the year of its composition at Rideau Hall before invited guests of Her Excellency, Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada and his Excellency John Ralston Saul. Immediately afterwards it was broadcast on the "On Stage" series in a national broadcast for the CBC at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto.

Until the year 2003, OCTAGON's programmes had been built around two great works for this enlarged chamber ensemble of strings and winds - the Beethoven Septet, Opus 20, and the Schubert *Octet*, Opus 166. There is no question that together, they create a magnificent programme.

But in common with similar national ensembles in other countries around the world, we were constantly looking for new repertoire. It was clear that if we were to continue touring, broadcasting and recording, we would require a work of substance by a major Canadian composer which could stand in the peerless company of Beethoven and Schubert and which we could tour for many seasons to come. Most of all, we needed a work from our own times that would truly reflect our shared belief that Chamber Music is alive and well in Canada.

That was when Malcolm Forsyth came to the rescue!

It has been said that Chamber Music is a "conversation among equals" and with that in mind we conceived the idea of a Concerto for eight. In this new piece, possibly for the first time in musical history - both literally and figuratively - nobody has to play second fiddle! Instead, there are two first violins, and their role in the Concerto is a splendid duo in which they display their virtuosity and their equality.

All the rest of us have our moments of glory, too - it is truly a "concerto for eight"— a series of variations in which, one by one, we strut our moment on the stage. In New Orleans Jazz at the start of the 20th century, the soloists each stood to display their virtuosity....it was known as a "ride". We invite you along for a series of "rides". We may not stand, and we aren't exactly improvising, but Malcolm Forsyth has given us a wonderful sense of freedom which carries with it some of the characteristics of those memorable moments from the world of jazz.

Malcolm Forsyth's *Concert for Eight* is no ordinary piece! With this one work, Professor Forsyth has helped solve our repertoire problem and also - in giving us a true concerto of equals - he had performed an act of healing therapy for second violinists around the world!

Octet in F Major, Opus 166

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Adagio, allegro - Andante un poco mosso - Scherzo - Theme and Variations - Minuet - Andante Molto, Allegro

Schubert's magnificent (and slightly mysterious) *Octet, Opus 166* has often been referred to as "a missing Schubert Symphony." Quite certainly, the addition of the double bass to the traditional string quartet creates an orchestral string sound. The three wind soloists, each selected for their sonority and lyricism, give parts of the Octet a sense of concerto, with required virtuosity as well as the associated instrumental prominence. None the less, the great Austrian musicologist Alfred Einstein (cousin of the eminent scientist, Albert) says of the work "In spite of the double-bass, the Octet is, in fact, the purest and most delicate chamber music, which never oversteps its limits." So which is it?

Today's audiences may choose equally to view the work as an expanded string quartet or a scaled-down symphony, both opulently clothed in the garb of the multi-movement Divertimento. Given this constant and ever apparent dichotomy, the work seems to hover somewhere between the two forms, conjuring up at one moment an intensity that stems from the heart of the string quartet, at another a "Romantic" version of the old Cassation, coupled - as Einstein suggests - with the traditional mixture of martial and pastoral.

Schubert wrote the *Octet* in February 1824 on a commission by Count Ferdinand Troyer, who stipulated that the new work should be exactly like Beethoven's Septet, which preceded it by nearly 20 years. Its similarity to the Beethoven extends beyond the choice of instruments (it is identical there, except for the addition of an invaluable second violin part) to a parallel structure of movements. We need not be surprised when we note that Schubert, in obliging obedience to his patron, follows the same pattern!

The *Octet* is a relatively long work - nearly 55 minutes - but few major compositions so eloquently reflect what critics of the time referred to as "Schubert's heavenly length!"

Program Notes by George Zukerman

Some special notes about the Schubert Octet

String Quartet players lead a charmed musical life with a plethora of such glorious repertoire that it is inevitably hard for them to say that one great work stands out above any other. Wind soloists, on the other hand, find chamber music opportunities far less frequent. The Schubert Octet, therefore, has special meaning for these players, and Messrs Campbell and Zukerman have each contributed a few lines about their beloved Opus 166.

Jim Campbell writes:

The Schubert Octet is a dream come true for any clarinet player who values the lyrical quality of the instrument. The opening of the second movement is one of the greatest melodies ever given to the clarinet.

George Zukerman observes:

The Octet provides a glimmer of what Schubert might have been able to offer the bassoon had he ever written more extensively for it. In the first movement, the instrument is allowed spectacular leaps and harmonic replies to the horn. In the slow movement there are glorious passages where the bassoon achieves the limpidity of the dolce clarinet. High point is in the Minuet movement, where the gentle ländler scored for violin and bassoon in octaves is reminiscent of similar scoring in the Fifth Symphony.

OCTAGON 2005

A remarkable recipe for unusual chamber music.

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2 principal players of leading Canadian Orchestras

and stir gently with

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Rehearse at a high temperature for sufficient time to bring to a musical boil..

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The instruments of *OCTAGON 2005*

Andrew Dawes plays on a J.B. Guadagnini made in 1770 in Parma, Italy

Patricia Shih plays on a Nicolo Gagliano made in 1761 in Naples, Italy

Rivka Golani plays on a modern viola made by the American-Hungarian master craftsman,
Otto Erdesz

Antonio Lysy plays a Carlo Tononi instrument made in Venice, in about 1727

Wilmer Fawcett plays on a bass made by J.B. Vuillaume in Paris in 1844

James Campbell plays Selmer clarinets

Ken MacDonald plays on a Triple horn, handbuilt in 1996 by Englebert Schmidt
in Tiefenried, Germany

George Zukerman plays a Heckel bassoon, #9174, hand crafted in 1950 from Black Forest
Maple wood

OCTAGON 2005 features some of Canada's most widely recorded instrumental soloists in a programme built around the rarely heard *Octet* by Franz Schubert and the newly commissioned *Concerto for Eight* by Canadian composer, Malcolm Forsyth.

The ensemble was first formed in 1999, and has since then undertaken five national tours with concert appearances in such major venues as The Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, the Chan Centre in Vancouver and Edmonton's Convocation Hall, The Eckhardt-Gramaté Hall at the University of Winnipeg, and in March 2003 a special invitation concert for Her Excellency the Governor General, at Rideau Hall.

Andrew Dawes, O.C. is one of Canada's most distinguished violinists, acclaimed around the world as recitalist, chamber musician and soloist. A founding member of the world-renowned Orford String Quartet, he also served as Principal violinist of the celebrated Tokyo String Quartet.

Patricia Shih is first violinist of the Borealis String Quartet which was recently elevated to national fame as BC finalists in the cross-country CBC *Great Canadian Music Dream* contest.

Rivka Golani, for whom more than 200 works including 30 concertos have been written, is recognized as one of the great violists and musicians of modern times.

Antonio Lysy is recognized universally as an international "super-star" of the 'cello, appearing with major orchestras and ensembles in many of the world's great concert halls.

Bassist **Wilmer Fawcett** appears frequently as guest soloist with touring chamber ensembles. He is also a founding member of Canada's unique salon ensemble, *Viveza*.

Widely recorded, internationally renowned, clarinetist **James Campbell, O.C.** is among Canada's most honoured and distinguished soloists. He also celebrates 15 years as artistic director of "The Festival on the Sound". His "Stolen Gems" album on Marquis Classics won a 1986 JUNO award.

Kenneth MacDonald is currently Principal horn of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. Prior to his move to the West he was Principal player of Symphony Nova Scotia and the Hamilton Philharmonic and he has also frequently played for the Canadian Opera Company and the Vancouver Opera Orchestra.

In four decades of active international touring, **George Zukerman, O.C., O.B.C.**, has been credited with elevating the bassoon from the back ranks of the Symphony Orchestra to an honoured role as soloist.

Nicholas Arthur Kilburn Memorial Concert Series

In 1980, Peter Kilburn made a substantial contribution to the Department for the purpose of initiating the Nicholas Arthur Kilburn Concerts, a series of concerts by world renowned artists. Over the years, he contributed even more money, wisdom and guidance to the project, to the point that now the fund provides not only for the yearly N.A.K. Concert, but also supports a series of six to eight other concerts yearly given by Faculty and friends here at the University.

The name of Kilburn at this University stands for generosity, vision and dedication to excellence in music performance, and is responsible in no small measure for the reputation the Department of Music enjoys across the country.

This series of annual concerts is organized in memory of Nicholas Arthur Kilburn (1875-1931), a former member of the University of Alberta Board of Governors, by his late sons Nicholas Weldon and Peter (BA, University of Alberta, 1929). The presence of **Octagon 2005** here tonight is made possible by the generosity of the Kilburn family.

- 1981: Jorge Bolet, pianist
- 1982: (spring) York Winds
- 1982: (fall) Vancouver Chamber Choir
- 1983: Shura Cherkassky, pianist
- 1984: Guy Fallot, cellist
- 1985: Elly Ameling, soprano
- 1986: Eugene Istomin, pianist
- 1987: Franco Gulli, violinist
- 1988: Maureen Forrester, contralto
- 1989: Marek Jablonski, pianist
- 1990: Joseph Swensen, violinist
- 1991: Kaaren Erickson, soprano
- 1992: Detlef Kraus, pianist
- 1993: Ofra Harnoy, cellist
- 1994: Heinz Holliger, oboist
- 1995: Louis Quilico, baritone
- 1996: Stephen Hough, pianist
- 1997: Antonin Kubalek, pianist
with Ivan Zenaty, violinist
- 1998: David Higgs, organist
- 1999: Edith Wiens, soprano
- 2000: Convivium, keyboard trio
- 2001: Claude Frank, piano
- 2002: Jens Lindemann, trumpet
- 2004: Nathan Berg, baritone



